

which they were appointed. It would also help to alleviate the delays at service points and improve the supervision of public areas and service to the public.

A comparison with the staffs of the Auckland and Wellington Central Libraries shows that the pressures on our staff are considerably greater than in the other centres. With a library staff of 29 the Canterbury Public Library made over 928,000 loans in 1967/68; Auckland Central Library made 405,000 with a staff of 49, and Wellington Central Library, 670,000 with a staff of 41. These figures are not a reflection of inefficiency in the other centres but an indication of the poor standards of service in Christchurch, particularly in reference service. In Auckland and Wellington, reference services have been developed to the stage where they have made a real impact on civic life including that of business and industry.

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SUBURBAN LIBRARY SERVICE :

For too long, lip-service has been paid to the splendid achievements of the suburban libraries under the voluntary system of staffing. In all but a few cases these splendid achievements relate only to the long hours (over 800 hours per week altogether) and devotion to duty of the voluntary workers. The City is heavily indebted to these public-spirited people and could ill afford to replace them at this stage, but the service most suburban libraries are offering at present is a very poor reward for the effort put into it.

There is no desire on anyone's part to undermine the voluntary system though it must be accepted that it will inevitably be superseded. There is already evidence that it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract volunteers to assist in some areas and the demand for paid assistance already voiced by some libraries indicates that the present pattern is unlikely to be extended in the future.

The generally low standards of service in the suburbs is revealed in the comparisons with Auckland and Wellington branch library issues. From nine branch libraries and a bookmobile Auckland issued 1,600,000 books in 1967/68 while Wellington, with ten branches and a bookmobile issued over 900,000 books. Though not all suburban libraries keep accurate issue statistics the most optimistic estimate would be not much more than 500,000 issues from eighteen service points. This poor showing points to the inadequacy of the service and explains the heavy burden placed on the Central Library.

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As an interim measure the immediate aim of the Council as the City's library authority should be towards the ultimate attainment of uniform terms and standards of service throughout the suburban libraries. The major barrier to this is the reluctance of many libraries to abandon the subscription system and offer free-and-rental service to all. Within the limitations of the present system the free part of suburban service can be provided satisfactorily through the Pooled Stock scheme; the libraries can charge rental fees for their own books which are invariably the type for which borrowers will willingly pay a small fee. Burwood has proved that, by adopting these terms, the present basis of Council subsidy is enough to give them reasonable funds. Burwood's subsidy works out at 14 cents per borrower and the total spent per borrower is 40 cents. The worst of the subscription-run libraries receives a subsidy of \$1.45 per borrower and spends \$2.66 per head for a vastly inferior service.

A positive approach to suburban library service is long